PROPOSED PROGRAM DETAILS FOR RENTAL PROPERTY OWNERS

Q: How can I increase my chances of passing inspection?

A: Take advantage of printed materials (i.e. list of violations) to prepare a unit for inspection. Our office is always available to answer questions and provide technical support before your inspection so that it can go smoothly. Our goal is for you to have smooth sailing through the inspection process.

Q: What are the most common technical issues discovered in other localities?

A: It would be advisable to check for these before setting the inspection date:

- Lack of working smoke detectors. This can be as simple as having a removed battery to not having any detectors at all. A smoke detector is required on each floor level of the unit. One should be located in the area of sleeping rooms. When installing detectors, make sure you follow the manufacturer's installation instructions. A detector mounted in a wrong location on the wall or ceiling can be as bad as not having one at all.
- Make sure windows can be opened and that they will stay open on their own. Using sticks and trash cans can be dangerous as props, especially in an emergency. Most windows that have lost their counter-balance or spring can be repaired for less than \$2 per window.
- Temperature and pressure valves (T&P) valves on water heaters and boilers need to be in good working order. Make sure they have a discharge pipe that takes potential scalding water towards the floor.
- Watch for electrical receptacles that do not have a ground wire that have been replaced with
 grounded type devices. This occurs when a two-pronged receptacle is replaced with a three. The
 code requires that you replace a two-wire receptacle with the same unless there is an appropriate
 ground wire. Another option is to install a ground fault circuit interrupter type receptacle (GFCI).
 These do not require a ground to operate properly and will provide the required protection for the
 new three pronged receptacles.

Q: What happens if a violation is found?

A: A violation notice will be issued. As long as the problems are repaired in the time provided, no additional action will be taken. Items that don't affect life safety will be given a reasonable time to correct.

Q: What if I can't finish correcting the violations in the time you provided?

A: Generally, the inspection staff will give reasonable completion times to complete the task. Our goal is to see that units covered under the program are safe and maintained. In situations where violations do not directly affect the safe occupancy of the building or create a problem to the neighborhood, we will consider requests for extensions. Documentation should show that attempts that have been made to remedy the violations, such as written contracts for repairs, plans developed, extended periods of inclement weather. Extensions generally will not be granted in cases where work has been turned over to a tenant to complete and they have failed to do so, or where there is no documentation.

Q: Will this delay me renting the unit?

A: The inspection schedule is either one year or four years; it does not change if the tenant changes.

Q: Will I be able to occupy my units if they have a violation found during the inspection?

A: Mostly, yes. Units may be occupied while minor repairs take place as long as there is a clear plan to allow a re-inspection after occupancy. However, severe violations involving safe, sanitary, or decent provisions of the state building code prohibit occupancy.

A: How does the city know which houses are rentals?

A: The City will send out an initial notice to all property owners in the established districts. Rental property

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owners need to complete a form and send back to the Community Development Department. Inspections will be scheduled at the owner's convenience once the property identification form is received.

Q: What happens if I don't contact you for a re-inspection by the date you established?

A: Our first step will be to send you a Notice of Violation. Failing to comply with a Notice of Violation may lead to court action and potential fines. The last consequence is that you will lose your four-year exemption that you may have received if you don't correct your violations in time.

Q: Will the tenants have to take time off work to be there during the inspection?

A: The City won't require the tenants to be there as long as the property owner is, but they are welcome to be present during the inspection. Inspections can be scheduled on evening and weekend hours to accommodate those who work.

Q: Will owners need to bring an older building up to current building code standards?

A: No. Generally, properties need to meet the code applicable when they were constructed. An exception is the requirement of smoke detectors in all residential units or if an unsafe condition is found.

Q: Will a building owner be required to paint the interior at the change of occupancy?

A: No. Interior wall coverings must only be clean, sanitary and free from holes and major breaks.

Q: What if I don't agree with what the inspector cited me for?

A: The first step is to talk with the inspector. If, after you have consulted with the inspector, you are still not satisfied the violation exists, feel free to contact the Property Maintenance Division Manager. If you are still not satisfied, you may contact the Director of Community Development. Finally, there is a formal appeals process found in the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code.

Q: What happens to a rental property owner in one of the districts if they fail to notify the City that they have a rental property?

A: Rental property owners that fail to comply with notification requirements could be subject to a \$50.00 fine every thirty days. The City may also initiate other court proceedings to ensure compliance with the program. However, we realize some people that may purchase or convert future units may not be aware of the program. In these cases, we would provide notice to the owner giving them thirty days to properly notify us of their rental unit.

Q: What do I do if I sell a rental property in one of the districts?

A: If you sell a rental to another person, you are required to notify us within 30 days of the sale.

Q: What if I buy a home that is currently owner occupied, but I wish to place it on the rental market in one of the Rental Inspection Districts?

A: The new owner would need to contact the Community Development Department within 30 days after taking ownership to obtain and complete a Rental Property Identification form. An Inspection will be scheduled after we receive the form.

Have additional questions? Contact the Community Development Department at (757) 727-8311.